

Seminar 11th of February 2010

NO CASH, NO CARE?

removing financial barriers to increase the use of health services



The importance and urgency of improving health for populations in resource poor settings is shared by a broad range of actors including humanitarian, human rights and development oriented organisations. How can this be achieved though when the patient cost for a malaria treatment package in an African country can be the equivalent of two months wages?

Millions of people in resource poor countries are dying needlessly because they cannot afford the health care they need. In many places, Médecins Sans Frontières witnesses the insurmountable barriers that even small fees represent for families with extremely low incomes. Asking patients to pay means many do not seek care or only do so at a very late stage when their condition is already serious. Others incur debts or sell valuable assets jeopardising their livelihoods in order to pay these so called "user fees".

Reviews of health financing policies promoting patient fees over recent years reveal their inefficiency and harmful effects, especially on the poorest households, to the extent that they are no longer considered an appropriate financing mechanism for health services in many resource poor countries.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) brought health onto the international agenda with ambitious mortality reduction objectives. However, how can the objectives of reducing maternal and child mortality be reached if millions of women and their families remain excluded from essential health services?

In an attempt to accelerate progress towards the MDGs, several African countries, such as Uganda have taken the lead in implementing policies of removal of user fees for their population and the trend has gathered pace with a positive impact on the population's use of key primary care services.

The international community is slowly catching up, with leading development agencies such as UK Department for International Development (DFID), WHO, the World Bank, Unicef and others, adopting a clear position to support governments that seek to remove user fees.

So who should pick up the bill? Is it possible to implement free care, what is needed in order for principles to be put into practice and move from rhetoric to action?

This seminar will explore research results showing the impact of user fees, share experiences from actual implementation of free care. The discussion will also cover the alternatives and challenges ahead for improved health coverage and the achievement of the MDGs and the right to health.

Most welcome!

Speakers:

Mr. Robert Yates, Senior Health Advisor, UK Department for International Development (DFID)

Ms. Gunilla Backman, Policy specialist Health systems, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)

Dr. Christine Kirunga Tashobya, Ministry of Health, Uganda (To be confirmed)

Ms. Lise Bergh, Secretary-general, Amnesty International Sweden

Ms. Seco Gerard, Policy Advisor, Médecins Sans Frontières

Moderator: Ms. Anneli Ericsson, Médecins Sans Frontières - Sweden



Time: 9.00-13.00 Thursday 11th of February 2010
Sandwiches and coffee will be served during break

Place: Médecins Sans Frontières/ Läkare Utan Gränser premises
at **Gjörwellsgatan 28, Stockholm**

Language: English

Register: seminar@msf.org (8th of February the latest)

Questions: 08-55 60 98 00 (Kerstin Åkerfeldt/Anna Sjöblom)



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